

*Bene.* Troth my Lord, I haue played the part of Lady Fame, I found him heere as melancholy as a Lodge in a Warren, I told him, and I thinke, told him true, that your grace had got the will of this young Lady, and I offered him my company to a willow tree, either to make him a garland, as being forsaken, or to binde him a rod, as being worthy to be whipt.

*Pedro.* To be whipt, what's his fault?

*Bene.* The flat transgression of a Schoole-boy, who being ouer-joyed with finding a birds nest, shewes it his companion, and he steales it.

*Pedro.* Wilt thou make a trust, a transgression? the transgression is in the stealer.

*Bene.* Yet it had not bene amisse the rod had bene made, and the garland too, for the garland he might haue worne himselfe, and the rod he might haue bestowed on you, who (as I take it) haue stolne his birds nest.

*Pedro.* I will but teach them to sing, and restore them to the owner.

*Bene.* If their singing answer your saying, by my faith you say honestly.

*Pedro.* The Lady Beatrice hath a quarrell to you, the Gentleman that daunt with her, told her shee is much wrong'd by you.

*Bene.* O she misfide me past the indurance of a block: an oake but with one Greene leafe on it, would haue answered her: my very vitor began to assume life, and scold with her: shee told mee, not thinking I had bene my selfe, that I was the Princes Iester, and that I was duller then a great thaw, huddling left vpon left, with such impossible conuiance vpon me, that I stood like a man at a marke, with a whole army shooting at me: shee speaks poynyards, and euery word stabbes: if her breath were as terrible as terminations, there were no liuing neere her, she would infect to the north starre: I would not marry her, though she were indowed with all that *Adam* had left him before he transgressed, she would haue made *Hercules* haue turnd spit, yea, and haue cleft his club to make the fire too: come, talke not of her, you shall finde her the infernall Ate in good apparell. I would to God some scholler would coniuire her, for certainly while she is heere, a man may liue as quiet in hell, as in a sanctuary, and people sinne vpon purpose, because they would goe thither, to indeed all disquiet, horror, and perturbation followes her.

*Enter Claudio and Beatrice, Leonato, Hero.*

*Pedro.* Looke heere she comes.

*Bene.* Will your Grace command mee any seruice to the worlds end? I will goe on the slightest errand now to the Antypodes that you can deuise to send me on: I will fetch you a tooth-picker now from the furthest inch of Asia: bring you the length of *Prester Iohns* foot: fetch you a hayre off the great *Chams* beard: doe you any embassage to the Pigmies, rather then hould three words conference, with this Harpy: you haue no employment for me?

*Pedro.* None, but to desire your good company.

*Bene.* O God sir, heeres a dish I loue not, I cannot indure this Lady tongue. *Exit.*

*Pedro.* Come Lady, come, you haue lost the heart of Signior *Benedicke*.

*Beatr.* Indeed my Lord, hee lent it me a while, and I gaue him vse for it, a double heart for a single one, marry ouce before he wonne it of mee, with false dice, therefore your Grace may well say I haue lost it.

*Pedro.* You haue put him downe Lady, you haue put him downe.

*Beatr.* So I would not he should do me, my Lord, I should prooue the mother of fooles: I haue brought Count *Claudio*, whom you sent me to seeke.

*Pedro.* Why how now Count, wherefore are you sad?

*Claud.* Not sad my Lord.

*Pedro.* How then? sicke?

*Claud.* Neither, my Lord.

*Beatr.* The Count is neither sad, nor sicke, nor merry, nor well: but ciuill Count, ciuill as an Orange, and something of a ialous complexion.

*Pedro.* Ifaith Lady, I thinke your blazon to be true, though Ile be sworne, if hee be so, his conceit is false: heere *Claudio*, I haue wooed in thy name, and faire *Hero* is won, I haue broke with her father, and his good will obtained, name the day of marriage, and God giue thee ioy.

*Leon.* Count, take of me my daughter, and with her my fortunes: his grace hath made the match, & all grace say, Amen to it.

*Beatr.* Speake Count, tis your Qu.

*Claud.* Silence is the perfectest Herauld of ioy, I were but little happy if I could say, how much? Lady, as you are mine, I am yours, I giue away my selfe for you, and doat vpon the exchange.

*Beatr.* Speake cosin, or (if you cannot) stop his mouth with a kisse, and let not him speake neither.

*Pedro.* Infaith Lady you haue a merry heart.

*Beatr.* Yea my Lord I thanke it, poore foole it keeps on the windy side of Care, my cosin tells him in his care that he is in my heart.

*Claud.* And so the doth cosin.

*Beatr.* Good Lord for alliance: thus goes euery one to the world but I, and I am sun-burn'd, I may sit in a corner and cry, heigh ho for a husband.

*Pedro.* Lady Beatrice, I will get you one.

*Beatr.* I would rather haue one of your fathers getting: hath your Grace ne're a brother like you? your father got excellent husbands, if a maid could come by them.

*Prince.* Will you haue me? Lady.

*Beatr.* No, my Lord, vnlesse I might haue another for working-daies, your Grace is too costly to weare euery day: but I beseech your Grace pardon mee, I was borne to speake all mirth, and no matter.

*Prince.* Your silence most offends me, and to be merry, best becomes you, for out of question, you were born in a merry howre.

*Beatr.* No sure my Lord, my Mother cried, but then there was a starre daunt, and vnder that was I borne: cosins God giue you ioy.

*Leonato.* Neece, will you looke to those things I told you of?

*Beatr.* I cry you mercy Vncle, by your Graces pardon. *Exit Beatrice.*

*Prince.* By my troth a pleasant spirited Lady.

*Leon.* There's little of the melancholy element in her my Lord, she is neuer sad, but when shee sleepest, and not euer sad then: for I haue heard my daughter say, she hath often dreamt of unhappinesse, and wakt her selfe with laughing.

*Pedro.* Shee cannot indure to heare tell of a husband.

*Leonato.* O, by no means, she mocks all her wooers out of suite.

*Prince.* She were an excellent wife for *Benedick*.

*Leonato.* O Lord, my Lord, if they were but a weeke married,

married, they would talke themselues madde.

*Prince.* Counte *Claudio*, when meane you to goe to Church?

*Claud.* To morrow my Lord, Time goes on crutches, till Loue haue all his rites.

*Leonato.* Not till monday, my deare sonne, which is hence a iust seuen night, and a time too briefe too, to haue all things answer minde.

*Prince.* Come, you shake the head at so long a breaching, but I warrant thee *Claudio*, the time shall not goe dully by vs, I will in the interim, vndertake one of *Hercules* labors, which is, to bring Signior *Benedicke* and the Lady *Beatrice* into a mountaine of affection, th'one with th'other, I would faine haue it a match, and I doubt not but to fashion it, if you three will but minister such assistance as I shall giue you direction.

*Leonato.* My Lord, I am for you, though it cost mee ten nights watchings.

*Claud.* And I my Lord.

*Prin.* And you to gentle *Hero*?

*Hero.* I will doe any modest office, my Lord, to helpe my cosin to a good husband.

*Prin.* And *Benedick* is not the vnhopefullst husband that I know: thus farre can I praise him, hee is of a noble straine, of approued valour, and confirm'd honesty, I will teach you how to humour your cosin, that thee shall fall in loue with *Benedicke*, and I, with your two helpees, will so practise on *Benedicke*, that in despite of his quicke wit, and his queasie stomacke, hee shall fall in loue with *Beatrice*: if wee can doe this, *Cupid* is no longer an Archer, his glory shall be ours, for wee are the onely loue-gods, goe in with me, and I will tell you my drift. *Exit.*

*Enter Iohn and Borachio.*

*Ioh.* It is so, the Count *Claudio* shal marry the daughter of *Leonato*.

*Bora.* Yea my Lord, but I can crosse it.

*Iohn.* Any barre, any crosse, any impediment, will be medicinable to me, I am sicke in displeasure to him, and whatfoeuer comes athwart his affection, ranges euently with mine, how canst thou crosse this marriage?

*Bora.* Not honestly my Lord, but so couertly, that no dishonesty shall appeare in me.

*Iohn.* Shew me breefely how.

*Bora.* I thinke I told your Lordship a yeere since, how much I am in the fauour of *Margaret*, the waiting gentlewoman to *Hero*.

*Iohn.* I remember.

*Bora.* I can at any vnseasonable instant of the night, appoint her to look out at her Ladies chamber window.

*Iohn.* What life is in that, to be the death of this marriage?

*Bora.* The poyson of that lies in you to temper, goe you to the Prince your brother, spare not to tell him, that hee hath wronged his Honor in marrying the renowned *Claudio*, whose estimation do you mightily hold vp, to a contaminated stale, such a one as *Hero*.

*Iohn.* What prooffe shall I make of that?

*Bora.* Prooffe enough, to misuse the Prince, to vex *Claudio*, to vndoe *Hero*, and kill *Leonato*, looke you for any other issue?

*Iohn.* Onely to despight them, I will endeauour any thing.

*Bora.* Goe then, finde me a meete howre, to draw on *Pedro* and the Count *Claudio* alone, tell them that you know that *Hero* loues me, intend a kinde of zeale both to the Prince and *Claudio* (as in a loue of your brothers

honor who hath made this match) and his friends reputation, who is thus like to be cosen'd with the semblance of a maid, that you haue discover'd thus: they will scarcely beleue this without triall: offer them instances which shall beare no lesse likelihood, than to see mee at her chamber window, heare me call *Margaret*, *Hero*; heare *Margaret* terme me *Claudio*, and bring them to see this the very night before the intended wedding, for in the meane time, I will so fashion the matter, that *Hero* shall be absent, and there shall appeare such seeming truths of *Heroes* disloyaltie, that iealousie shall be cal'd assurance, and all the preparation ouerthrowne.

*Iohn.* Grow this to what aduerse issue it can, I will put it in practise: be cunning in the working this, and thy fee is a thousand ducates.

*Bora.* Bethou constant in the accusation, and my cunning shall not shame me.

*Iohn.* I will presentlie goe learne their day of marriage. *Exit.*

*Enter Benedicke alone.*

*Bene.* Boy.

*Boy.* Signior.

*Bene.* In my chamber window lies a booke, bring it hither to me in the orchard. *Exit.*

*Boy.* I am heere already sir.

*Bene.* I know that, but I would haue thee hence, and heere againe. I doe much wonder, that one man seeing how much another man is a foole, when he dedicates his behauiours to loue, will after hee hath laugh't at such shallow follies in others, become the argument of his owne scorn, by falling in loue, & such a man is *Claudio*, I haue known when there was no musicke with him but the drum and the fife, and now had hee rather heare the taber and the pipe: I haue knowne when he would haue walkt ten mile afoot, to see a good armor, and now will he lie ten nights awake caruing the fashion of a new dublet: he was wont to speake plaine, & to the purpose (like an honest man & a souldier) and now is he turnd orthography, his words are a very fantasticall banquet, iust so many strange dishes: may I be so conuerted, & see with these eyes? I cannot tell, I thinke not: I will not bee sworne, but loue may transforme me to an oyster, but Ile take my oath on it, till he haue made an oyster of me, he shall neuer make me such a foole: one woman is faire, yet I am well: another is wise, yet I am well: another vertuous, yet I am well: but till all graces be in one woman, one woman shall not come in my grace: rich shee shall be, that's certaine: wise, or Ile none: vertuous, or Ile neuer cheapen her: faire, or Ile neuer looke on her: milde, or come not neere me: Noble, or not for an Angell: of good discourse: an excellent Musitian, and her haire shal be of what colour it please God, hah! the Prince and Monsieur Loue, I will hide me in the Arbor.

*Enter Prince, Leonato, Claudio, and Iacke Wilson.*

*Prin.* Come, shall we heare this musicke?

*Claud.* Yea my good Lord: how still the euening is, As hush't on purpose to grace harmonic.

*Prin.* See you where *Benedicke* hath hid himselfe?

*Claud.* O very well my Lord: the musicke ended, We'll fit the kid-foxe with a penny worth.

*Prin.* Come *Balthasar*, wee'll heare that song againe.

*Balth.* O good my Lord, taxe not so bad a voyce, To slander musicke any more then once.

*Prin.* It is the witness still of excellency,

To